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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/716,487	11/20/2003	Atsushi Noguchi	086142-0589	6690
22428	7590	01/25/2006	EXAMINER	
FOLEY AND LARDNER LLP			BROWN, DREW J	
SUITE 500			ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
3000 K STREET NW				3616
WASHINGTON, DC 20007			DATE MAILED: 01/25/2006	

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary	Application No.	Applicant(s)
	10/716,487	NOGUCHI, ATSUSHI
	Examiner	Art Unit
	Drew J. Brown	3616

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --
Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) Responsive to communication(s) filed on 20 November 2003.
- 2a) This action is FINAL. 2b) This action is non-final.
- 3) Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) Claim(s) 1-27 is/are pending in the application.
 - 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) Claim(s) 1-27 is/are rejected.
- 7) Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) The drawing(s) filed on 20 November 2003 is/are: a) accepted or b) objected to by the Examiner.
 Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
 Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
 - a) All b) Some * c) None of:
 1. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

1) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)	4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413)
2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)	Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____.
3) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08) Paper No(s)/Mail Date <u>11/20/03</u> .	5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
	6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____.

DETAILED ACTION

Claim Objections

1. Claims 4 and 13 are objected to under 37 CFR 1.75(c), as being of improper dependent form for failing to further limit the subject matter of a previous claim. Applicant is required to cancel the claim(s), or amend the claim(s) to place the claim(s) in proper dependent form, or rewrite the claim(s) in independent form. Both of the claims recite that the guide rod and pillar garnish are configured to be mounted to the pillar so that a shortest distance between the interior surface of the pillar and any line substantially parallel to the interior surface of the pillar and passing through a center of the guide rod along said length is less than or equal to a shortest distance between the interior surface of the pillar and said line substantially parallel to the interior surface of the pillar and passing through said edge of the pillar garnish. This limitation does not further limit the claim because they depend upon claims 3 and 12, respectively, which recite the same limitation.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

2. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(e) the invention was described in (1) an application for patent, published under section 122(b), by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent or (2) a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent, except that an international application filed under the treaty defined in section 351(a) shall have the effects for purposes of this subsection of an application filed in the United States only if the international application designated the United States and was published under Article 21(2) of such treaty in the English language.

3. Claims 1-18 and 20-26 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Ogata (U.S. Pat. No. 6,866,293 B2).

With respect to claim 1, Ogata discloses a guide mechanism for a curtain airbag for guiding a longitudinal end of the curtain airbag, the curtain airbag configured to be able to

deploy downward along a side of an interior of a vehicle, where the guide mechanism comprises: a guide member (40) for the curtain airbag, configured to be vertically mounted (Figure 1) to a pillar (RP) of the vehicle and configured to guide the airbag over a length of the guide member (column 8, lines 38-42); and a pillar garnish (9) configured to be mounted to the pillar and to cover the guide member, wherein the guide member and pillar garnish are configured to be mounted to the pillar so that a shortest distance between the guide member along said length and an interior surface of the pillar (distance between guide member 40 and lowest portion of inner panel 2A as shown in Figure 3) is less than or equal to a shortest distance between a side of the pillar garnish and the interior surface of the pillar (distance between lowest portion of side 9d and lowest portion of inner panel 2A as shown in Figure 3).

With respect to claim 2, the length is an approximate distance from an upper end (40a) to a lower end (40b) of the guide member.

With respect to claims 3, 9, 15, and 23, the guide member is a guide rod, and wherein the guide rod and pillar garnish are configured to be mounted to the pillar so that a shortest distance between the interior surface of the pillar and a line substantially parallel to the interior surface of the pillar and passing through a center of the guide rod along said length (distance between vertical line passing though guide member 40 and the lowest portion of inner panel 2A as shown in Figure 3) is less than or equal to a shortest distance between the interior surface of the pillar and a line substantially parallel to the interior surface of the pillar and passing through an edge of the pillar garnish that is on a side toward the curtain airbag (distance between vertical line passing though the lowest portion of edge 9d and the lowest portion of inner panel 2A as shown in Figure 3).

With respect to claims 4 and 13, the guide rod and pillar garnish are configured to be mounted to the pillar so that a shortest distance between the interior surface of the pillar and any line substantially parallel to the interior surface of the pillar and passing through a center of the guide rod along said length is less than or equal to a shortest distance between the interior surface of the pillar and said line substantially parallel to the interior surface of the pillar and passing through said edge of the pillar garnish.

With respect to claims 5, 10, 14, and 22, the length is substantially equal to a vertical width of a window (SW2) opening adjacent to the pillar.

With respect to claims 6, 11, 16, and 24, the guide rod is substantially straight.

With respect to claims 7 and 20, Ogata discloses that the guide member and pillar garnish are configured to be mounted to the pillar so that said longitudinal end of the airbag is movable along the guide member without being bent (Figure 3) by any of said edges of the pillar garnish and an interior surface of the pillar during at least a portion of the deployment of the airbag.

With respect to claims 8 and 21, the guide member and pillar garnish are configured to be mounted to the pillar so that said longitudinal end of the airbag is movable along the guide member without being bent by any of said edges of the pillar garnish and an interior surface of the pillar throughout the deployment of the airbag.

With respect to claim 10, the guide rod is configured to be mounted to the pillar at an upper end and a lower end of the guide rod (column 8, lines 24-38).

With respect to claims 12 and 20, Ogata discloses a pillar configured to connect a main body of an automobile to a roof (RR) of the automobile and a pillar garnish connected to the pillar and configured to cover the guide member, the pillar garnish having an edge on a side toward the curtain airbag, wherein the curtain airbag is slideably connected to the guide member over a length of the guide member (column 7, lines 56-59), and wherein a shortest distance between an interior surface of the pillar and a line passing through a center of the guide member along said length and substantially parallel to the interior surface of the pillar is less than or equal to a shortest distance between the interior surface of the pillar and a line passing through said edge of said pillar garnish and substantially parallel to the interior surface of the pillar.

With respect to claims 17 and 25, the airbag comprises a connecting strap (38) that extends from the longitudinal end (side of airbag near rear pillar RP) and connected to the guide rod.

With respect to claims 18 and 26, the airbag comprises a lower end (bottom of airbag at end 38a as shown in Figure 4) different from the longitudinal end, and wherein the airbag comprises a connecting strap that extends from the longitudinal end and connected to the guide rod.

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4. Claims 1-18 and 20-26 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Tanase et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 6,783,152 B2).

With respect to claim 1, Tanase et al. discloses a guide mechanism for a curtain airbag for guiding a longitudinal end of the curtain airbag, the curtain airbag configured to be able to deploy downward along a side of an interior of a vehicle, where the guide mechanism comprises: a guide member (141a) for the curtain airbag, configured to be vertically mounted (Figure 18) to a pillar (RP) of the vehicle and configured to guide the airbag over a length of the guide member (Figure 18); and a pillar garnish (109) configured to be mounted to the pillar and to cover the guide member, wherein the guide member and pillar garnish are configured to be mounted to the pillar so that a shortest distance between the guide member along said length and an interior surface of the pillar (distance between guide member 141a and lowest portion of inner panel 3 as shown in Figure 17) is less than or equal to a shortest distance between a side of the pillar garnish and the interior surface of the pillar (distance between lowest portion of side 109 and lowest portion of inner panel 3 as shown in Figure 17).

With respect to claim 2, the length is an approximate distance from an upper end (141b) to a lower end (141c) of the guide member.

With respect to claims 3, 9, 15, and 23, the guide member is a guide rod, and wherein the guide rod and pillar garnish are configured to be mounted to the pillar so that a shortest distance between the interior surface of the pillar and a line substantially parallel to the interior surface of the pillar and passing through a center of the guide rod along said length (distance between vertical line passing though guide member 141a and the lowest portion of inner panel 3 as shown in Figure 17) is less than or equal to a shortest distance between the interior surface of the pillar and a line substantially parallel to the interior surface of the pillar and passing through an edge of the pillar garnish that is on a side toward the curtain airbag (distance between vertical line passing though the lowest portion of edge 109 and the lowest portion of inner panel 3 as shown in Figure 17).

With respect to claims 4 and 13, the guide rod and pillar garnish are configured to be mounted to the pillar so that a shortest distance between the interior surface of the pillar and any line substantially parallel to the interior surface of the pillar and passing through a center of the guide rod along said length is less than or equal to a shortest distance between the interior

surface of the pillar and said line substantially parallel to the interior surface of the pillar and passing through said edge of the pillar garnish.

With respect to claims 5, 10, 14, and 22, the length is substantially equal to a vertical width of a window (SW2) opening adjacent to the pillar (Figure 16).

With respect to claims 6, 11, 16, and 24, the guide rod is substantially straight.

With respect to claims 7 and 20, Tanase et al. discloses that the guide member and pillar garnish are configured to be mounted to the pillar so that said longitudinal end of the airbag is movable along the guide member without being bent by any of said edges of the pillar garnish and an interior surface of the pillar during at least a portion of the deployment of the airbag.

With respect to claims 8 and 21, the guide member and pillar garnish are configured to be mounted to the pillar so that said longitudinal end of the airbag is movable along the guide member without being bent by any of said edges of the pillar garnish and an interior surface of the pillar throughout the deployment of the airbag.

With respect to claim 10, the guide rod is configured to be mounted to the pillar at an upper end (141b) and a lower end of the guide rod (141c).

With respect to claims 12 and 20, Ogata discloses a pillar configured to connect a main body of an automobile to a roof (RR) of the automobile and a pillar garnish connected to the pillar and configured to cover the guide member, the pillar garnish having an edge on a side toward the curtain airbag, wherein the curtain airbag is slideably connected to the guide member over a length of the guide member, and wherein a shortest distance between an interior surface of the pillar and a line passing through a center of the guide member along said length and substantially parallel to the interior surface of the pillar is less than or equal to a shortest distance between the interior surface of the pillar and a line passing through said edge of said pillar garnish and substantially parallel to the interior surface of the pillar.

With respect to claims 17 and 25, the airbag comprises a connecting strap (132) that extends from the longitudinal end (117c) and connected to the guide rod (Figure 17).

With respect to claims 18 and 26, the airbag comprises a lower end (117b) different from the longitudinal end, and wherein the airbag comprises a connecting strap that extends from the longitudinal end and connected to the guide rod.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

5. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

6. Claims 19 and 27 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ogata in view of Seki et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 5,462,308).

Ogata discloses the claimed airbag as discussed above but does no disclose that a weather strip is mounted to the pillar and overlaps a side of the pillar garnish. Seki et al., however, does disclose a weather strip (11, Figure 5) that is mounted to the pillar (13) and overlaps a side of the pillar garnish (12). Therefore, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the invention of Ogata in view of the teachings of Seki et al. to have a weather strip mounted to the pillar and overlapping a side of the pillar garnish in order to protect the interior of the vehicle from poor weather conditions.

7. Claims 19 and 27 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Tanase et al. in view of Seki et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 5,462,308).

Tanase et al. discloses the claimed airbag as discussed above but does no disclose that a weather strip is mounted to the pillar and overlaps a side of the pillar garnish. Seki et al., however, does disclose a weather strip (11, Figure 5) that is mounted to the pillar (13) and overlaps a side of the pillar garnish (12). Therefore, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the invention of Tanase et al. in view of the teachings of Seki et al. to have a weather strip mounted to the pillar and

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overlapping a side of the pillar garnish in order to protect the interior of the vehicle from poor weather conditions.

Conclusion

8. The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure. Noguchi, Noguchi et al., Tanaka et al., Tanase et al., Bakhsh et al., Peer et al., Dominissini, Thomas et al., Steffens, Jr. et al. Tesch et al., Matsuura et al., and Osentoski et al. disclose similar curtain airbags with guide mechanisms.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Drew J. Brown whose telephone number is 571-272-1362. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Thursday from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m..

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Paul N. Dickson can be reached on 571-272-6669. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

Drew J. Brown
Examiner
Art Unit 3616

DJB
1/11/06


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